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## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

U. S. Federal Extension Service.

Washington, D. C.

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EDUCATIONAL WORK OF COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE;  
Vegetable Report to AMA Advisory Committee

## A. Progress on Work Under Way

Educational work in vegetable marketing is conducted by the State Extension Service on a matched fund basis. These programs usually include fruits vegetables and potatoes since the same Extension marketing personnel in the States is responsible for the commodity group. During the past year active AMA educational programs in vegetable marketing were in operation in Arkansas, Connecticut, Florida, Kentucky, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, New Hampshire, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota (primarily Potatoes), Oklahoma, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Hawaii and Puerto Rico. Beginning July 1, 1955 new projects have been approved in California, Missouri, Michigan and Alaska. In addition to the above States other vegetable marketing extension programs are being carried on with regular extension funds. With the technical assistance of the State marketing specialist, the county agricultural agents are including more marketing work at the local level in their educational activities.

In order to simplify the reporting of educational work carried out in vegetable marketing, this report is divided into four general areas: commodity programs with growers, shippers and other marketing agencies; programs aimed at improving marketing facilities, equipment and work methods; work with wholesalers, retailers and work with consumers.

WORK WITH GROWERS, SHIPPERS AND OTHER MARKETING AGENCIES

Progress and findings - 1955 recommendation "Expand marketing educational work carried out by the cooperative Extension Service with equal emphasis on work with growers, marketing firms, and allied industry people to improve product quality through better grading, packing, containers and other marketing methods, practices and procedures."

There are presently 23 AMA projects involving vegetables in 22 States. The projects include work of one or more full time specialist in each State in addition to the work of county agents. The educational programs with growers and marketing firms at county points may be divided into at least two general areas: (1) The solution of specific marketing problems and (2) marketing information to better prepare growers and others to make sound marketing decisions. Work on a specific problem includes such activities as grading, processing, packaging, handling, sales organizations, merchandising and other technological advances, explaining their use, their advantages and their limitations.

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Much time has been devoted to general marketing information including vegetable outlook; acreage marketing guides program; what market information is available, how it is collected, and how it can be used in adjusting marketing practices; explaining government programs relative to vegetable including marketing agreements and orders, grades and standards, PACA, maturity regulations and other Federal or State programs effecting the marketing of vegetables. All States have done some work during the past year involving one or several of the above problems or functions.

There has been a variety of educational activities carried out with producers, wholesalers, retailers, and others concerning handling, grading, packaging and merchandising vegetables. For example, Massachusetts, Connecticut, Vermont, New York and Rhode Island have expanded its educational program with growers, packers and handlers to emphasize the need for more packaging. Schools and demonstrations have been conducted on types of packages, packing materials, equipment, etc. Rhode Island Extension Service compiled a comprehensive bulletin on "Repackaging Fruits and Vegetables" for use in its educational program with growers, packers, wholesalers and retailers. The continued trend toward self-service, supermarkets with their complete prepackaged produce departments is making it more important that vegetables be put up in consumer packages. Growers in the New England States especially are finding it increasingly difficult to meet the competition from more distant areas because of this trend.

During the past year increasing request from the commercial prepacking industry for technical assistance has come to the Extension Service. Many of the prepackagers requesting information have had difficulty with either loss of moisture or with fogging within the package. Others requesting information relative to the type machinery best suited to their particular operations as well as the type of film and the size consumer unit preferred by the trade.

Educational programs with roadside operators have continued with additional emphasis during the past year. Produce farms located in heavily populated areas such as the northeast and west have indicated the greatest interest in this method of marketing during the past few years. Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Delaware, Michigan and California have been most active in this method of marketing. Meetings with roadside stand operators, pointing out how they may increase their sales, reduce spoilage losses and increase their operational efficiency were held. Individual assistance has been given to these operators, appraising their location, facilities, and merchandising practices including grades, containers, displays, etc. have been most effective in getting improved practices adopted. New York has launched a long-term educational program to step up efficiency in marketing fruits and vegetables. Two district marketing agents have been employed to serve the area in and around Buffalo and Rochester. These specialists will demonstrate tested marketing research practices to producers, handlers, wholesalers and retailers with the objective of getting the results of

research into practice as soon as possible. The market agents in each area will be guided by local advisory committee made up of producers, trade people and other extension and research workers.

Plans: With funds available educational work will be expanded and intensified with growers, marketing firms, and allied industry people to maintain and improve product quality through providing information and other educational assistance on improved marketing practices, methods and organizations.

#### IMPROVING MARKETING FACILITIES, EQUIPMENT AND WORK METHODS

Progress and Findings - 1955 recommendation "Expand marketing educational work carried out by the cooperative Extension Service with growers and handlers to improve produce marketing facilities, operations and methods."

Educational work in marketing facilities, equipment and work methods are a part of the overall marketing program that is being carried out by the cooperative Extension Service. The program is based primarily upon research findings and proven practices used by the trade. The program includes work on material handling equipment and work methods that will afford more efficient operations throughout the marketing process.

Research activities have expanded greatly during the past few years in this field. The results of this work have given Extension a rather clear cut pattern for educational work.

Last year California, North Carolina, Tennessee, Wisconsin, New York, Massachusetts, Maryland, Virginia, Florida, Mississippi, Michigan, New Mexico and Texas devoted considerable emphasis to increasing the efficiency of their marketing process. This work is made up primarily in marketing organizational work, assisting in determining needed physical facilities, equipment and work methods that would afford a more efficient operation. For example, in Virginia, assistance was given in organizing a wholesale and farmers produce market in Charles County through which more than \$300,000 worth of produce was marketed during the summer of 1954. Also, the Extension Service in cooperation with the Lynchburg Chamber of Commerce and the Division of Markets, made an appraisal of the market situation in Lynchburg, and published a written report giving specific recommendations for improving the wholesale produce facilities. A comprehensive educational program was carried out with growers, shippers, wholesalers, retailers, city officials and others pointing out existing inefficiencies in the market and plans of actions necessary to correct them. Television, radio and press releases were used, and several workshops were held with key industry people who would be most involved in a program necessary to implement the recommendations discussed.

Growers in many local vegetable areas are finding it more difficult each year to meet the requirements of the large chain store buyer and wholesale operators. Many States are asking Extension to assist them with this problem. An example of

this is the four-county area of Lapeer, Saint Clair, Genesee and Macomb, Michigan where producers were experiencing difficulty in moving their products. They were being by-passed by volume buyers of the big Detroit chain stores and wholesale houses. Extension was called in to assist these growers with their marketing problem. In cooperation with research personnel, the district marketing agent and county agents of the four counties, meetings were held with these vegetable growers resulting in recommendations for improving their marketing situation. An intensive educational program was carried out with the truck farmers in the area which resulted in the organization of the Eastern Michigan Vegetable Marketing Association. Some 33 growers in the four-county area own and operate this vegetable association which consists of a centralized sales organization and physical facilities and equipment for grading, washing and packaging their produce. By so doing, these growers are in a position to supply large buyers with a standardized product in sufficient volume over a period of time that makes it attractive and economical for them to use. This association, with its sales headquarters and assembly facilities, is located at Capac, Michigan, and according to these growers it will save them thousands of dollars annually in transportation cost alone.

In Massachusetts - The Boston Market Committee of the New England Research Council was appointed in April 1953 to investigate the situation in the Boston produce market and to recommend a course of action to the council and its member agencies. Three Extension marketing specialists from the New England States served on this committee. A written report was presented to the New England Research Council on marketing and food supply in April, 1955.

The committee pointed out three major problems as follows: (1) efficiency in handling, quality loss, losses from pilferage, high labor cost, cost of traffic congestion; (2) the efficiency of the price-making process; (3) preservation of a market for nearby farm produce. Other points were discussed in the report which reemphasized the many problems outlined in the Marketing and Facilities Research Branch report issued in 1950.

In Mississippi - Extension personnel has carried on a very effective educational program with wholesalers, shippers and producers relative to more efficient utilization of the marketing facilities of the Farmers Central Market at Jackson. Three new assembly, grading and packing sheds have been built in the southern part of the State during the past year. This work has been a cooperative effort of the Extension Service, State Department of Agriculture and State Markets Board to improve quality of produce offered for sale; to reduce spoilage and waste; to reduce transportation cost and to expand market outlets.

In Maryland, an active educational program with processors is carried on by the Extension Service. This program is based on several years of intensive research aimed at improving the canners' quality control, equipment and methods, as well as the redesign of facilities and product flow to eliminate inefficiencies and improve the quality of finished product. In addition to this research program on processing techniques and equipment, the Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station has been conducting research on the merchandising and distribution of Maryland and

Tri-State canned vegetables since 1949. Several reports of this research program have been published and the results are included in this educational program. Although very little research has been conducted by the Maryland Experiment Station on materials handling equipment and work methods in processing plants and warehouses, other States and commercial firms have much information available in this area of operations. Therefore, the Extension Agricultural engineer is working with the food technologist and marketing specialist on improved handling equipment and more efficient work methods. The processors are encouraged to adopt sound cost accounting techniques that will show the need for adjustments in particular phases of the operation where costs are excessive. Information is being provided concerning market outlets. Particular attention is given to market outlets where processors of the State have locational advantages. The Department of Agricultural Engineering is cooperating in the work by surveying plant arrangements, equipment used and handling methods and making recommendations for increasing efficiencies in the plant operations.

Plans: To intensify educational work in marketing facilities, equipment and work methods and to expand the work in States so desiring on a match funds basis in line with available funds.

#### WORK WITH WHOLESALERS, RETAILERS AND SECONDARY SUPPLIERS

Progress and Findings - 1955 recommendation "Expand the marketing educational work carried on by the Cooperative Extension Service with wholesalers, retailers and secondary suppliers to encourage better merchandising and handling in methods, practices and techniques."

During the past year new projects in food merchandising were initiated in Ohio and South Carolina. The program has been expanded and intensified in Massachusetts, Indiana and Michigan. Nine States carried on educational programs in food merchandising activities with one or more full-time specialists while ten additional States gave specialized attention to this field or work on a commodity basis.

With approximately  $1\frac{1}{2}$  million people employed in the retail distribution field there is a tremendous job ahead if the most recent findings of our research programs in this field are to be applied at the earliest practicable moment.

The trade, both independents and chains, have worked closely with State Extension Services in most States in developing and carrying out these educational programs. The objective of the program is to assist retailers in improving their efficiency by reducing losses, streamlining their operations and increasing sales. By so doing, the retailer will gain an immediate advantage over his competitors but through competition growers and consumers will benefit through increased sales and improved services.

These programs with retailers are carried on mainly through informational meetings, demonstrations, educational clinics and commodity merchandising activities. Several State Extension Services including Indiana, Michigan, Alabama, and

Maryland held one to three-day retailer short courses on the college campus where the resident teaching and research staff personnel were brought in on the training program. The typical program involves sending out periodic news letter summarizing latest research reports and other important technical and timely information on food supplies and marketing trends.

Wherever possible, educational programs with retailers are made a part of the regular programs with growers, handlers and consumers. Meetings with retailers are planned and carried out with other county programs. Retailer committees are organized by or with the assistance of county agents where feasible in order to insure an integrated, effective overall extension program.

An example of what is included in typical clinics and schools with retailers is: Preparation and display of fresh fruits and vegetables; prepackaging and self-service produce methods and practices; pricing, procurement and refrigeration practices; general food store management; training store personnel; improving efficiency of store personnel, work methods and incentive practices; business outlook for distributors, etc.

Market tours are encouraged in most States where retailers observe first hand some of the operations in stores where improved equipment, facilities and methods are being employed. Also, they include visits to terminal markets, prepackers, shippers and growers where various operations and functions are performed in order to improve their understanding of the marketing system.

It is estimated that approximately 7,000 local trade people were reached in one or more phases of these educational programs during 1954-55.

Plans - With funds presently available, work will be expanded and intensified with retailers, wholesalers and secondary suppliers to encourage better merchandising and handling methods, practices and techniques.

#### MARKETING INFORMATION FOR CONSUMERS

Progress and Findings - 1955 recommendations "Expand the marketing educational work carried on by the Cooperative Extension Service with consumers to include additional areas such as Cincinnati, Memphis, Portland and New Orleans where no program is now in operation and to intensify work in States where needed and desired."

It is recognized that in solving the problems of marketing farm products it is necessary to work directly with consumers as well as handlers and farmers. Four of the objectives of marketing information programs for consumers are --

- I. To aid in the orderly marketing of agricultural commodities by helping to move normal and abnormal supplies, encouraging the acceptance of new and improved marketing practices, and reporting consumer wants and needs to producers and handlers.
- II. To assist in the more effective use of agricultural products by
  - a. encouraging consumption of foods in season and in abundant supply,
  - b. informing consumers of availability, relative cost, selection, care, value, and use of agricultural products,
  - c. informing consumers about new products,
- III. To help consumers get maximum satisfaction from their purchases of agricultural products.
- IV. To help consumers develop a better understanding of the marketing system, functions, and problems.

#### Status of Programs

During the past year the Cooperative Extension Service has significantly expanded its marketing information programs with consumers. Thirty-nine States, Puerto Rico, and Hawaii now conduct some work in this area. Emphasis has been placed on encouraging new programs in areas of heavy urban concentration. There are now programs in 62 cities in the United States. In addition to these, there are five regional programs--New York; Boston; Kansas City; Wheeling, West Virginia; and Cincinnati, Ohio.

The potential audience to be reached in the areas now having programs comprises about one-half the population of the United States.

The workers on marketing information programs for consumers regularly collect, interpret, and disseminate current localized food-marketing information. Radio, newspaper, and television are the major media used to reach consumers.

At the present time, there are 90 Extension consumer information workers. The effectiveness of these 90 people has been greatly increased, however, through the use of consumer food-marketing material by county extension agents, radio, television, and newspaper personnel, health and welfare workers, and the like.

Plans - Expand the program this year in line with additional funds that have been made available.





